

## Section 167-03

# Caring for the Wounded

## Individual Stories - Walter Wickens

7557 Cpl Walter Wickens was wounded on November 6th 1914 at First Ypres while serving with D Company of the 1st Royal Berks. His diary was transcribed by his great neice, Delyse Joy Brown in 2002.

**Nov 6<sup>th</sup>** In the same trenches in reserve to remainder of Coy in front line, sorted out the letters which could not be delivered, some having previously been killed & some wounded & sent to hospital farther in the rear, marked each letter accordingly tied them in seperate (sic) bundles, & placed them in a preserved meat box which I had in the trench with me. Received a shrapnel wound in the left hip about mid-day, the box having saved me from a smashed hip, the box diverting the course of the largest piece of shrapnel which entered the trench, turning it downwards just grazing me instead of striking the hip as it would have done had not the box been there, crawled to the next trench & had it bound up with the Field Dressing which we carry then returned to my own trench, & waited until after dark, then after handing the unissued letter to the O.S.M. was carried on a Stretcher to an house in the wood, which was being used as a dressing Station, afterwards being put in an ambulance with 6 others, & was taken to Poperinghe Station & placed in an hospital train, not sorry to arrive after our 9 mile ride on rough roads, it being impossible to entrain at Ypres as that was being bombarded, our ambulance having a narrow escape while coming through the Square 2 large shells bursting just behind us. Stripped off underclothing on boarding the train, & given a change, a great treat, all wounds dressed immediately by one of the Nurses, covered with a blanket, & given a mug of cocoa between 20f us about 9pm & settled down for a sleep, quite a releif (sic) to be able to sleep without clothes & equipment first time since leaving Aldershot, journey commenced soon afterwards travelling all night

**Nov 7<sup>th</sup>** Very comfortable, still travelling, Bread & Cheese & Cocoa served for Breakfast, passed through Calais once more. arrived at Boulogne about 4~5pm, some going straight on the Boat bound for England, myself with others being placed in a Motor Ambulance & conveyed to an Hospital in a Chateau at Wimereux, about 2 or 3 miles from

Boulogne, said to have once been the residence of the Lord-Mayor of Boulogne, given soup on arrival & another change. This hospital being controlled by the Women's Hospital Corps & only recently opened, the Corps having come from Paris. Lady Doctors doing the Dressings & all operations; 2 Orderlies, Civilians who had volunteered for the work, being the only men their work chiefly being to carry the wounded on Stretchers to & from the Operating Theatres, up & down stairs. remained in this hospital until Nov 25th.

**Nov 25<sup>th</sup>** Left Hospital with 7 others driven in a Motor Ambulance to the Boat, going aboard the St David (owned by the G. W.R. & in ordinary times in service from Fishguard [Wales] to Rossebare [Ireland]) , about 12 mid day. Dinner served on board about 2 pm. Afterwards put in cabins 4 men in each, managed to secure the top berth, moved from the Quay soon after 6pm. dropped anchor in the harbour, not allowed to cross the Channel during the night managed to get a good sleep.

**Nov 26<sup>th</sup>** Up anchor, journey across the channel commenced soon after 6:30 am. very rough at the start, afterwards getting smoother. Bread & Butter Cheese & Cocoa being brought to us for Breakfast, dinner on board, & after a pleasant voyage arrived at Southampton about 3pm. Stretcher cases, which fortunately were not many being disembarked first, 7 placed on the 1st train. Was among the number to go with the Second train, & left at 4:20 pm no tea, Soup issued about 8 pm. Arrived at Birmingham at 10 pm & found tea, sandwiches, cake, apples, a piece of chocolate, Cigarettes & matches waiting for us, & served to us by members of the St John's Ambulance Corps, every man being served in about 10 minutes, 9 a creditable performance of the ladies) The journey continued & arrived at Manchester at 1:45 am, found hot Coffee waiting for us on the platform, managed to drink it before getting into a Motor Car which conveyed us to the 2nd Western General Hospital Whitworth St, where all Surgical Cases were taken, Medical Cases going to another Hospital, quite a number of people about despite the lateness of the hour, who cheered us as we passed, placed in Ward C 9 on arrival at the hospital, & after having a bath & another change got into bed

once more & remained there all day & night.

**Nov 28<sup>th</sup>** Got up to have a wash & heard that I was to be transferred to a convalescent home at IOam, drew own clothes from store, & waited in the reception room until 12:30 pm, quite a number who had been discharged from various hospitals coming in to obtain their Sick Furlough & Warrants to enable them to proceed to their own homes. received orders to go back to our Wards to have dinner, to return to the reception room immediately afterwards. Remained there until 3:15 pm then 8 of us entered two Motor Cars, 4 in each & drove to the Temporary Military Hospital Basenden W Averington, 7 had tea on arrival

Remained here until Dec 19th being well treated by the inhabitants of Basenden & Averington.

Walter Wickens returned to the 1st Battalion after he recovered and became a Sergeant. He was discharged 31/3/1920 having completed his term of service for which he engaged 26th January 1904. He died 31st December 1952 aged 63



